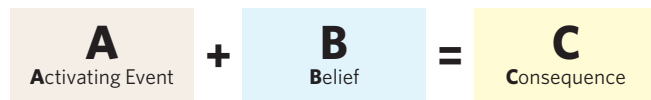


ABC's of managing stress

There's no getting around it. Stress is a part of life, and being overly stressed can cause us to overreact to otherwise normal situations. For example, getting stuck in traffic can generate thoughts and feelings of impending doom, such as, "If I'm late I'll be fired!" Even if such disastrous outcomes are realistic, it's how well you respond to situations like traffic jams that dictate your level of stress.

Learning your ABC's

The following format can help you analyze events, what you think and feel about those events and help you create more realistic beliefs based on facts. This can help you better manage stress when difficult situations arise.



- "A" is the **activating event**, the situation that triggers stress.
- "B" is our **belief** about the event, which makes all the difference in influencing whether or not we become stressed out or handle a situation calmly.
- "C" is the **consequence**, or our resulting reaction or feeling.

Sometimes, we jump from "A" to "C" without ever stopping to consider "B," and the "B's" are what actually create "C." A lot of times it's tricky to figure out the "B's" because they often are thoughts we don't even realize we're having.

The real issue

People react to stressful situations in different ways. In fact, the same event can cause different reactions. Review the following charts to see how two people handled the same stressful situation differently. Can you identify which one is you?

Activating Event	Stuck in traffic and running late for work
Belief	"I should never be late." "I'm going to be fired for being late."
Consequence	Stressed and worried about being fired. Get upset and have negative thoughts about work. Get angry at other drivers.

No one likes being stuck in traffic, but another driver might use the time to mentally plan for an afternoon meeting or think about what they'll do over the weekend.

Activating Event	Stuck in traffic and running late for work
Belief	"Traffic jams happen. There's nothing I can do to prevent it." "I'll take a shorter lunch today and leave for work a little earlier tomorrow." "Traffic jams are unpleasant, but maybe I'll use this time to decide what to do on Sunday."
Consequence	Able to relax and enjoy the extra time to think about a meeting. Calm enough to remember that you're almost always on time and that the boss said you were doing a great job.



ABC's of managing stress

Try it out

Practice your ABC's for managing stress on the situations listed below. Think about how you handle the positive and negative situations life throws your way. Then, think about a time when you've been upset over a stressful situation.

Activating event (What happened)	Belief	Consequence (Feelings or actions)
My work computer crashed and had to be serviced	Negative "I'll never finish my project on time." "I don't have any control over what happens in my life."	
	Positive "I'll find another way to finish my project." "Computers sometimes crash."	
My boss asked me to correct a mistake	Negative "I shouldn't make mistakes." "My boss will think I can't get the work done."	
	Positive "I'll find out how to fix the problem."	
My spouse/partner forgot my birthday	Negative "I'm not appreciated or loved."	
	Positive "We've both been really busy lately."	
My child's teacher called me to discuss a poor grade	Negative "The teacher will think I'm a bad parent."	
	Positive "I can find out how to help my child do better." "I can spend more time with my child."	
Your own event:	Negative	
	Positive	

Get help when you need it

Recommended reading:

The Feeling Good Handbook by David D. Burns. Plume Books Revised Edition (1999).

Lift Your Mood Now: Simple Things You Can Do to Beat the Blues by John Preston. New Harbinger Publications (2001).

If you'd like help from a professional on how to rethink stressful thought patterns, call the number on the back of your BCBSNC member ID card to find a provider.

Sources: *The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook*, Sixth Edition (2008). Martha Davis, Elizabeth Robbins Eshelman and Matthew McKay.
The Wellness Book (1992). Herbert Benson and Eileen M. Stuart.
The Complete Idiot's Guide to Managing Stress, Second Edition (1999). Jeff Davidson.
Stress Management for Dummies (1999). Allen Elkin.

